Summary of Water Conditions
March 1, 2004 (see below for updates)

Two major storms in February have greatly improved the water supply outlook. All regions in the State benefited and it now appears that water supplies will be adequate for most users this year. The mid-month storm, which began on the holiday weekend on February 16, was especially wet as it had subtropical moisture input, producing moderate flood flows on many northern California streams. The snowpack gained substantially from the late storms near the end of the month and now exceeds the normal April 1 amounts in all west slope Sierra basins from the San Joaquin River north and is much above average in the North Coast region.

Forecasts of April through July runoff are near 100 percent overall, but still less in the south. Water year forecasts, assuming normal weather for the remaining months are somewhat less at 95 percent. The projected mean April-July basin runoff ranges from 127% of average in the north (Trinity) to 74% of average in the south (Tule). At the end of December, the statewide Full Natural flow was about 80% of average. This figure dropped to about 75% by January 31. A very wet second half of February , however, rose the statewide Full Natural Flow value to about 90% of average. The median Sacramento (4 River) Runoff forecast rose to 18.7 MAF (98% of the 1951-2000 average). The median Sacramento Valley Water Year Type Index rose to “Above Normal' and the San Joaquin Valley Water Year Type remains 'Below Normal'.

Snowpack water content increased by nearly half during the month and is 125 percent of average for this date and 110 percent of the April 1 average. (April 1 is the normal date of maximum accumulation.) The pack is well above average for March 1 in all regions, but not as much so in the south. Lower elevation snow courses are especially heavy and some of this snow may melt during March if warm weather occurs. Last year the snowpack was 80 percent at this time.

Precipitation from October 1 through February was about 105 percent of average, boosted by the wet month. Last year precipitation stood at 100 percent. Precipitation during February was 160 percent of average with all regions being above normal for the month. February precipitation ranged from about 125% of average on the Tulare Lake Basin to about 170% of average on the North Coast. The cumulative total since October is around 115% of average in the Sacramento River region, 100% in the San Joaquin River region, and 90% in the Tulare Lake Basin. The Northern Sierra 8-station precipitation gained 14.5 inches during February, raising the water year total to 41.6 inches. As of March 1, the statewide snow pack was 108% of the historical April 1 average, or 123% of average to date.

Runoff for the first 5 months of this season has been about 90 percent of average compared to 100 percent last year. February runoff was 130 percent of average. Most of the Sacramento and North Coast region multipurpose reservoirs shifted into the flood control mode during the latter half of the month. Estimated runoff of the eight major rivers of the Sacramento and San Joaquin River regions during February was 3.9 million acre-feet. February unimpaired runoff in the Sacramento River region was 135% of average, while the San Joaquin region was 68% of average. The cumulative Sacramento River region runoff since October 1 is 94% of average, compared to 99% a year ago. Meanwhile, the cumulative San Joaquin River region runoff since October 1 is 53% of average, compared to 58% a year ago.

Reservoir storage gained over 2 million acre-feet during the month and now is 105 percent of average compared to 100 percent last year. Regional percentages range from

115 in the North Coast to 45 in the North Lahontan where low Lake Tahoe levels depress the percentage.

March 9, 2004

This update includes the observed precipitation from March 1 through the 8th. (It's posted at http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/iodir/B120UP.) The projected median April-July runoff now ranges from 108% (Lake Shasta) to 72% (Tule River). The past week has been very dry throughout the state and, as a result, the forecast is down statewide since last week. The Northern Sierra 8-Station Index gained 0.8" over the previous week, bringing the seasonal total up to 42.3", 116% of average for the date. This total is 85% of the water year total. The statewide snowpack is now 113% of average to date, and ranges from 134% in the Northern Sierra to 102% in the Southern Sierra. For current snow pillow information see http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/current/PAGE6.

March 16, 2004

This update includes the observed precipitation from March 9 through the 15th. (It's posted at http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/iodir/B120UP.) The projected median April-July runoff now ranges from 106% (Lake Shasta) to 69% (Tule River). The past week has been very dry throughout the state and, as a result, the forecast is down statewide since last week. The Northern Sierra 8-Station Index is unchanged during the week. The seasonal is 42.3", 109% of average for the date. This total is 85% of the water year total. The statewide snowpack is now 101% of average to date, and ranges from 122% in the Northern Sierra to 89% in the Southern Sierra. For current snow pillow information see http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/current/PAGE6.

March 23, 2004

This update includes the observed precipitation from March 16 through the 22nd. (It's posted at http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/iodir/B120UP.) The projected median April-July runoff now ranges from 101% (Lake Shasta) to 52% (Tule River). The past week has been very dry throughout the state and, as a result, the forecast is down statewide since last week. The Northern Sierra 8-Station Index has not changed since last week. The season total is 42.3", 105% of average to date. This total is 85% of the water year total. The statewide snowpack is now 86% of average to date, and ranges from 107% in the Northern Sierra to 76% in the Southern Sierra. For current snow pillow information see http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/current/PAGE6.

In general, we expect precipitation (approximately 1.5 inches) in the Northern Sierra on Thursday and early Friday morning with lighter amounts as far south as the Kern Basin. The latest NWS Climate Prediction Center long-range weather forecast maps at http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/long_range/lead01/off_index.html suggest above normal temperatures in the Sierra and Northern California and near normal precipitation throughout California for the spring.

The next Bulletin 120 forecast, for conditions on April 1, will be available by April 8.